

Chicken Cutlets with Caper-Lemon Sauce

It's fine to experiment with unusual ingredients and different cuisines. That's what makes cooking so fun. But it's also important to have a grasp of the basics, the classic recipes that built the foundation for such experimentation. It's just as impressive to serve a perfectly seasoned, well-cooked chicken cutlet in a tangy caper butter sauce as it is some newfangled fad dish. Maybe more so. Like the little black dress, some things never go out of style.

Ingredients:

For the cutlets

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1/2 cup all-purpose flour, for dredging
Kosher salt
3 tablespoons butter

For the sauce

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/4 cup minced shallot
1/4 cup white wine
2 tablespoons capers, rinsed and drained
4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

For the garnish (optional)

1 lemon, supremed (see Cook's Note)

Directions

Place a chicken breast half between two sheets of plastic wrap and pound to an even thickness (about 1/3 inch). Trim any ragged edges. Repeat with the remaining pieces of chicken, stacking them on a plate as they're ready. Put the flour in a pie plate and place between the chicken and the stove. Place a serving platter on the other side of the stove. Have sauce ingredients ready nearby.

Preheat a 12- to 14-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Season each cutlet on both sides with salt and then dredge in the flour to lightly coat, shaking off excess. Melt 1½

tablespoons of butter in the pan. Slip 2 cutlets into the pan. The butter will sizzle around the cutlets. You want them to brown on one side, which will take 2 to 4 minutes, before flipping and lightly browning the other side, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove to the serving platter. Wipe out the pan with a paper towel and return the pan to the heat. Melt the remaining butter and cook the rest of the chicken.

When the chicken is done, work quickly to make the sauce – the entire process should take about 2 minutes. Wipe out the pan again and reduce the heat to medium-low. Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter and add the shallots, cooking just long enough to soften, about 30 seconds to 1 minute. Pour in the wine and capers. Swirl and cook to make a nice pan sauce, about 30 more seconds. Cut the remaining tablespoon of butter into small pieces and add them to the pan to finish the sauce (called *monter au beurre* or “mounting with butter”). It will take on a glossy, sexy texture. Remove the pan from the heat and add the lemon juice. Swirl to combine, and then spoon over the chicken. Garnish with lemon segments (see Cook’s Note) if using.

Cook’s Note

Supremed lemons are a garnish of the old-school variety, most often used for fish dishes. They are elegant and fun to make, so we’re including them here -- even if it’s a tad unorthodox. To make supremes, cut off both ends of the lemon with a paring knife. Stand the lemon up on a flat end and cut off the rind -- pith and all -- starting at the top and slicing along the contour of the fruit to the bottom. Once fully peeled, hold the lemon in your hand and carefully slice on either side of the membranes, releasing a membrane-free segment. You’ll need a few segments to garnish each piece of chicken. When you’ve cut away the supremes, you can squeeze the remaining membranes for extra juice.

total time: 30 minutes

active prep: 30 minutes

serves: 4 to 6

difficulty: easy